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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM I2
SUBJECT: PRT KARBALA: SLA BRINGS ITS "A TEAM", WHILE INA PLAYS A DIVERSE BENCH

REF: A. 10BAGHDAD 0291
 1B. 08BAGHDAD 3431
 1C. 10BAGHDAD 0386

Classified By: PRT Karbala Team Leader John Kincannon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. This is a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Karbala report.

¶2. (C/NF) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: PM Maliki expects the State of Law Alliance (SLA) to attain six (out of ten) seats in his home province of Karbala, with likely winners in Da'wa to include Da'wa parliamentary bloc head Ali al-Adeeb, current Minister of Municipalities Riad Ghraib, current Minister of Health Saleh al-Hasnawi, and Karbala Da'wa party chair Fouad al-Doragi. SLA's list is dominated by national political heavyweights from Karbala who can deliver votes for Maliki in his home province, without diminishing Da'wa's position in the provincial government. (Note: Maliki reportedly forbade Da'wa incumbents on the Provincial Council (PC) from running and none did. End note.) Many local observers agree with Maliki's conclusions on results for Adeeb and Hasnawi, but are less certain about success for Ghraib and Doragi based on poor performance and less popularity among Karbalans. Maliki is said to have thrown his support behind SLA female candidate Bushra Hassan Ashour (Independent Group), a well-known PC member, but local observers favor Manal al-Musawi (Amal al-Rafidayn) from the politically powerful Hindiyah family. The Iraqi National Alliances, s (INA) list leads with candidates well-known and popular in the province, includes no national figures and is not dominated by either the Sadrist or ISCI. What remains to be seen is whether Karbalans are more drawn to SLA's "star" candidates or locally popular figures aligned with the religious parties.
END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

NO SURPRISES ON STATE OF LAW ALLIANCE (SLA) LIST

¶3. (C/NF) According to an aide to Karbala Governor Amal al-Din al-Hir who participated in an electoral strategy session with PM Nuri al-Maliki and Governor Hir on February 16, Maliki expects to win six seats (out of ten in Karbala). Maliki expects SLA winners to include Da'wa candidates Ali al-Adeeb, Riad Ghraib, Saleh al-Hasnawi, and Fouad al-Doragi, taking four of the six seats expected to be won by SLA (reftel A). This analysis tracks with a similar assessment offered by Mohammed Sadiq al-Hir (protect), Chairman of Karbala's Hotel and Restaurant Association and a cousin of Governor Hir.

¶4. (C/NF) Karbala's UNAMI representative, Shaykh Ali Kamonah (protect), told PRToffs he agreed with SLA predictions for Adeeb and Hasnawi, noting that Hasnawi, the Minister of Health, is popular among voters in Husayniyah and Hindiyah. PRT LES also expect Adeeb's reelection and while he is

popular among wealthy businessmen, others question how many ordinary Karbalans either don't know him or perceive him as "too Iranian." Some PRT LESSs and Kamonah do not expect Ghraib, the Minister of Municipalities, to win, describing him as unpopular in Karbala because of his poor handling of land issues as Minister. An LES with ties to the local business community, however, credits Ghraib with favoring Karbala over other provinces for key Ministry projects. While SLA leaders count Doragi among the winners, LES disagree, noting he is not well-known in Karbala. (Note: Doragi is rumored to pull the strings in Karbala for Da'wa but remains a somewhat shadowy figure to the Karbala public, perhaps because he spends most of his time in Hindiyah and not in Karbala city. End note.)

¶5. (C/NF) Maliki directed Governor Hir to throw SLA support Q5. (C/NF) Maliki directed Governor Hir to throw SLA support behind female candidate Bushra Hassan Ashour (Independent Group), a well-known PC member, over Manal al-Musawi (Amal al-Rafidayn). Musawi is favored by Kamonah and LES because of her strong local political ties in Hindiyah. (COMMENT: Musawi's brothers, Mohammed and Abbas, are the leaders of a Da'wa splinter party in Karbala, Amal al-Rafidayn, and hold the PC Chairman and First Deputy Governor positions in Karbala. Ashour is number nineteen on SLA's list, while Musawi is number seven, decreasing Ashour's ability to beat Musawi. Moreover, the Musawi clan has a proven vote bank in Hindiyah, something that the mercurial, fickle and ambitious Ashour) who has changed parties with every election - has yet to demonstrate in any of her previous electoral outings. This is probably an effort by SLA to take their Amal al-Rafidayn coalition partners in Karbala "down a peg." End comment.)

¶6. (C/NF) Also favored to win from SLA by LES and Kamonah is Ali al-Kurdi (Independent Group) a popular local civil society activist and educator. Kurdi received the second highest number of votes in the January 2009 provincial election after Yousef al-Haboubi (Independent) but was not on a list that won sufficient votes to be allocated a seat. Kurdi is said to be close to Iraqi Oil Minister Shahristani.

¶7. (C/NF) COMMENT: Mohammed al-Hir (protect) advised PRToffs that Maliki prohibited current PC members from running in the Parliamentary election. Successful COR bids would strip out valuable experience and leadership in the provincial government among Da'wa members, leaving significant power with the Musawi family and their splinter party, Amal al-Rafidayn. Da'wa's retention of their PC members with power and experience prevent the heavy-handed Musawi brothers from having free rein in the province. Previous disputes with the Musawis over provincial IP leadership resulted in the formation of Amal al-Rafidayn, weakening Da'wa's hold on the province (reftel B). Although Da'wa and Amal al-Rafidayn are political relatives, by balancing national and local representation Maliki keeps local intra-party rivalries to a minimum, avoids endangering his national agenda, and secures his control in the province. End comment.

IRAQI NATIONAL ALLIANCE (INA) LIST IS NO SURPRISE EITHER

¶8. (C/NF) Topping INA's list is Dr. Habib al-Turfi (ISCI), Chairman of Karbala's PC Health Committee, head of surgery at al-Husayn hospital Karbala's largest), and known to distribute free services and medicine to the poor. Turfi was arrested in February 2009 by ISF with USF support, along with his brother and son, for suspected links to insurgent groups. LES note that while Turfi himself is not well known in Karbala, the story of his arrest "by the Americans" is and it may generate votes among anti-U.S. sympathizers. Although Turfi enjoys links to ISCI, Karbala media link him to the State Department-designated terrorist group Kata'ib Hizbullah (KH) after he held a press conference condemning his arrest which was photographed in front of a Kata'ib Hizbullah (KH) banner with Dhiya Kadhum al-Fayadh, Karbala's religious head of KH at his side. LES and Kamonah expect Turfi to win one

of two or three seats for INA in Karbala (reftel A).

¶19. (C/NF) Jawad al-Hasnawi (Al Ahrar/Sadrists), a former Deputy Governor of Karbala, is also expected to win a seat for INA, according to LES and Kamonah. He is a top Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMSA) official in Karbala and viewed by some as a JAM-SG commander. He played a significant role in the August 2007 Shabbaniyya uprising in Karbala that left hundreds dead among both the ISF and Sadrists. Hasnawi fled to Jordan/Syria immediately after the uprising, although he did not resign his position as Deputy Governor until August 2008. He is popular in Sadrist neighborhoods of Karbala. He was arrested by USF in April 2009 on outstanding warrants, but freed after 2 days.

¶10. (C/NF) INA's list also includes Iman Hassan (Al Ahrar), a leading female figure in the Sadr movement. Her brothers and cousins are Sadrists leaders in Sadr City and Karbala, and she is related to the Sadr spokesman in al-Kufa, Najaf. LES give her a strong chance of winning a seat for INA in Karbala. Another strong contender for an INA seat, according to LES, is Mohsen al-Kinani (Solidarity), a former PC member and well-known tribal figure. Iman al-Asadi (ISCI), a current Karbala MP and active member of the Parliamentary Legal Committee, is considered honest and courageous. Her leadership role in exposing government corruption, such as that of former Minister of Trade, Abd al-Fatah al-Sudani, is admired in Karbala, although PRT LES opinions are mixed about her success of reelection.

¶11. (C/NF) LES and Kamonah speculate that Iraqiyya or Bolani's Coalition of Iraq's Unity may win a seat in Karbala, but their campaigns so far are lackluster. LES note little advertising for Iraqiyya in Karbala, opining that people may be afraid to show support for Ayad Allawi for fear of being labeled Ba'athist supporters. The only local candidates of note for either party are PC member and Chairman of the Agricultural Committee, Sattar Safi al-Ardawi (Constitutional Party, who left Amal al-Rafidayn as the result of an intra-party dispute) and Hamid al-Hilali (Democratic Forum), a former PC member and local civil society activist. LES were advised by the party that the Coalition of Iraq's Unity posters have not yet arrived from Baghdad.

COMMENT: VOTERS CHOICE - NATIONAL OR LOCAL STARS?

¶12. (C/NF) COMMENT: Most observers see Karbala's election as a "two horse race" between SLA and INA (reftel C). SLA's list is dominated by national political heavyweights from Karbala who can deliver votes for Maliki in his home province. LES observe that SLA candidates themselves are sure they will win and are not even actively campaigning in Karbala. In contrast, the INA list includes no national figures, is not dominated by either the Sadrists or ISCI, and leads with candidates well-known and popular in the province. What remains to be seen is whether Karbalans are more drawn to SLA's "star" candidates who don't seem interested in even bothering to campaign locally or popular local figures aligned with the religious parties. End comment.
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